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SUBJECT: JORDAN: U.S. ARREST OF JORDANIAN WIDELY VIEWED AS
ENTRAPMENT

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C) Most Jordanians believe that the Federal Bureau of Investigation encouraged and enabled 19-year-old Jordanian Hossam Smadi to plot a terrorist act against the United States before arresting him on September 24 in Dallas, according to media reports and our contacts, including the Chief of the Royal Court Nasser Lozi in a meeting with Ambassador. Even the head of Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate Mohammed Raqqad "showed a rare human side" wondering aloud why U.S. authorities didn't contact their Jordanian counterparts and then just deport the disturbed teenager, according to Lozi. Some Jordanians speculate that Smadi's arrest was part of a U.S. intelligence conspiracy to exert pressure on Jordan for concessions as part of an eventual Israeli-Arab peace deal, according to the editor of Jordan's leading online news site Ammonnews, Basil Okour.

¶2. (SBU) Smadi was arrested in Dallas and charged in a federal criminal complaint with attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction to blow up a Dallas skyscraper, according to the FBI. Smadi was initially identified when he made contact with an undercover FBI agent posing as an Al Qaeda operative.

¶3. (SBU Media coverage of the Smadi arrest has focused on Smadi's alleged entrapment, fueled by a wide round of interviews in Jordan by Smadi's father, Maher Smadi. The headline of the September 27 issue of the Jordan Times read, "Jordanian arrested in US was manipulated by FBI--Father." Jordan's leading cartoonist Emad Hajjaj published a sketch September 28 in Al Ghad daily, which showed an FBI agent holding Smadi by the scruff of the neck, saying, "A reckless young man! We fooled him, entrapped him and detained him before he carried out a terrorist operation." A U.S.-Jordanian reporter from a small Jordanian satellite station contacted Embassy Spokesperson on September 27 to request an interview with a U.S. official to clarify the arrest of Smadi, "a mere teenager from a troubled family."

¶4. (SBU) A Dallas-based reporter is currently in Jordan and is interviewing Maher Smadi and others about the case, prior to Smadi's next scheduled appearance on Oct. 5, according to Okour. In line with Department guidance, the Embassy is referring media queries to the Public Defender's Office. Beecroft